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REMARKS ON DUELLING.

BY WALTER COLTON.

He is truly valiant, that can wisely suffer
The worst that man can breathe:—

SHAKSPEARE

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SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK, SS.

L. S.

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"Remarks on Duelling. By Walter Colton.

'He is truly valiant, that can wisely suffer

The worst that man can breathe:—'

Shakspeare."

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THE remarks, contained in the following pages, have been detached from a course of ethical Lectures, delivered by the Author to the Cadets, members of the American, Scientific, and Military Academy. They appear in their present shape at the request of a few Gentlemen, whose opinions the Author has been accustomed to regard with confidence : if they have now led him into a mistake, the error is to be attributed to the most philanthropic feelings. Considerations of an ambitious character neither dictated their counsel, nor secured his compliance,—since as motives of action, they could have but little efficiency, unless extended beyond the probable range and real pretensions of this pamphlet. If there is ambition in the heart of the Author, it fixes itself on objects which transcend the merits of a few hasty pages, and which may be of more lasting benefit to his species.

REMARKS ON DUELLING.

A VICIOUS custom, countenanced only by the weak and insignificant, is comparatively harmless; but when it is sanctioned by talent and station, it becomes dangerous in the extreme. Were the practice of duelling confined to the corner of the street, or the deck of the pirate, we might let it pass without any alarming apprehension; but when we see it invade the bar, the bench of justice, the hall of legislation, and the chamber of solemn debate, we may justly tremble for our moral and political well-being, and feel deeply anxious to place the great interests of morality and freedom beyond the reach of its withering grasp.

We may not indeed apprehend a destruction of our invaluable institutions from the invasions of this vice; nor is this necessary to justify our alarm. It is sufficient for us to know, that any portion of our interests is within its reach; and we shall be excused if we appear in an attitude of defence at the outward porch of

the temple, though the enemy might otherwise never be able to force its doors, pollute its shrine, and overthrow its altar.

But our object is not confined to the defensive; we shall not be satisfied with merely keeping our enemy at bay, unless we can dispossess him forever of the power to rally. We mean to come to a direct encounter with this bustling pretender, try the strength of his muscles, wrench from him, if possible, his last weapon, knock off his glittering mask, expose his real features, and make one pass at his heart. We may fail, even of a partial triumph; if so, we leave the ground to abler champions, and retire with the consciousness of good intentions.

But for considerations connected with *courage*, a duel would seldom take place. It is the fear of being considered a coward, that drives most men into this desperate contest. A man, who is sensible that his honour has been invaded, issues a challenge to avoid the charge of pusillanimity; and the man, thus challenged, accepts it to escape the imputation of cowardice. But do either of them establish a claim to courage? We think not. The affair leaves them just as it found them, unless this new exhibition of servility to public opinion, has diminished the respect we had entertained for their manly qualities.

Courage is the most sublime passion of which the human soul is capable. It is a calm surrender of ourselves to the mighty event before us. It is an uncompromising, unquestioning devotion to the dread, inscrutable issue. It differs most essentially from that blind, reckless exposure of life, so frequently and falsely term-

ed courage; and which may belong, in as eminent a degree, to the man who leaps from a precipice, as to him who dies in battle. True courage is not indifferent to consequences—the sacrifice must not transcend its object. All the circumstances, which predict success or failure, must be held in tranquil, luminous survey, till the calm, collected judgment of the man determines, and then action alone remains. But we must be more particular on this subject, as it is one vitally connected with the practice of duelling.

A man of true courage, will require that the object to be gained, should be of sufficient importance to warrant the sacrifice it may cost.

Or else on the principles of mere selfishness, he would be the loser, and would discover a want of capacity in attempting the object, or in not being able to compass it at a less expense of means. Such a man would discover more wisdom in total inaction, than in the most vigorous exertions. For every measure adopted, and every mean applied, would only sink him in the estimation of men, till all that would be left him, or that he would leave himself, would be insignificance and poverty. It would be more for the credit of such a man, to be still, than to stir; to be silent, than to speak; to be asleep, than awake; to be in the grave, embalmed in respectful remembrance, before he has forfeited his last claim to our esteem.

The object then must be of sufficient importance to justify the means: otherwise a man discovers a want of practical wisdom, the foundation of true courage.

Now, under this requisition, will not a great deal of what is termed courage, fall short of its pretensions?

A youth passes beyond his comrades upon a dangerous sheet of ice,—here is an exposure of life, but is there any *courage*? What is the object to be gained, but a daring to do what common prudence forbids? And yet this blind rashness passes among youth for courage, simply because it endangers life. The absurdity of such an opinion, were it not so common, would render it beneath exposure.

A man rushes into a building that is sinking in flames, for the sake of securing a treasure dear to his heart. If money is his object, his love of gold is stronger than that of life, and this is the extreme of avarice. If his object is to dare what shall astonish others, he shows more fearlessness than wisdom; and that is blind temerity. If both of these are his object, just in proportion to the danger, he exhibits little more than a want of common prudence, and common sense.

A soldier, in a defensive conflict, mounts the breast-work, and exposes himself to the fatal fire of the enemy—does this bespeak true courage? If his object is to show how little he fears death,—he might have done this just as effectually by shooting himself. If his object is to animate his comrades, that would imply the fatality of his position, and his immediate death would convince them of their own wisdom, and of his rashness and folly. The only question here, is, whether the end justifies the means, and just so far as it falls short of this, his conduct is wanting in true courage; for it is so far wanting in practical wisdom, and all that goes beyond this, is rashness.

A man challenges another into a duel: suppose the

person he challenges, *has* injured his feelings, and marred his reputation; if he has given just occasion for this, he ought to be silent, and carefully avoid a second error: but if he has given no provocation, if it is a wanton, brutal attack upon his character and station, is it a dignified procedure on the part of the aggrieved person, to bring himself in any respect down to a level with the shameless culprit?

In sending a challenge, he virtually says, “you have done every thing in your power to exasperate my feelings, to ruin my reputation, to destroy my peace, and prostrate my character. If you have not effected your object, the failure is to be attributed to your want of capacity, and not to any relentings in your malignant nature. But though you have shown your villany in attempting the object, and your weakness in not being able to effect it, and are no longer, in my estimation, a man of honesty or sense, and deserve only my pity and contempt, yet I will now generously give you an opportunity of taking my life. I will meet you, weak and unprincipled as you are, on the same footing, and place *my* life at issue with yours, although I consider the continuance of *your* existence, a matter of no consideration, any farther than the slight injury it may occasion your species.”

Such is the spirit of a challenge; and does not the man who issues it, degrade himself? Does he not stoop from the dignity and character of his station? Does he not discover a weakness, a want of manly independence, that destroys his claims to our respect? And ought he not, in future, to be coupled with the culprit, whom he has consented to meet on equal foot-

ing? Why should we refuse to place them, where they have placed themselves? on the same level—associates in crime!—equals in disgrace! And, if either of them shall afterwards rise in our estimation above that contemptible level, let it be by a course of penitence, thorough reformation, and claims subsequently established. Never again let our pride of morality and good sense be put to the blush, by seeing a man return from such a disgraceful conflict, without even the forms of an apology, to a station of dignity and trust—a station that he has forfeited by a breach of confidence, and disgraced by this exhibition of weakness and depravity.

But let us look for a moment, at the conduct of him who accepts the challenge. He is not, at least in his own estimation, the unprincipled, contemptible being that his antagonist supposes. He considers himself a man of strict honour, and declares that he is willing to be governed by those laws, which secure every man in a quiet possession of his rights and privileges. Now if he *has* committed the offence charged upon him by his antagonist, the only reparation he can make, to meet the feelings of the public, and the just demands of the injured person, is a frank acknowledgment of his offence, and a strenuous effort to counteract its evil tendency. If he refuses to do this, he ought to fall under the cognizance of those laws, which are established for the protection of character, and the chastisement of such incorrigible offenders. If by management he can escape the infliction of legal justice, there is a regard for reputation, and a sense of propriety in the community, that will brand him with indelible reproach;

and like Cain, he will carry the mark of his crime upon his front to the grave.

The morals of the community are not yet so far gone, that it is necessary for a man to become his own avenger; or for the sake of punishing the offence, degrade himself to a level with the culprit. He who plunders character, though not arraigned before the bar of legal justice, will meet a heavier doom in the universal odium that will be poured upon him. If there ever was a time, when the depravation of public morals justified a man in appearing as his own avenger, it is not now; and he who assumes this right, shows a contempt for the laws of his country, and a want of confidence in public sentiment, that leaves him no claim to protection or sympathy. He has discarded the privileges of the law, and the feelings of the public, which furnish a sufficient protection for every man of uprightness. He has taken the redress of his injuries into his own hands; and if he falls, it should be without compassion: if he survives, it should be without respect.

But to return to the person who receives the challenge. If he has *not* committed the offence alleged against him by his opponent, by what law, by what considerations, is he bound to treat that billet of rage and insult, otherwise than with silent contempt, or public exposure? If he is innocent, that is sufficient, public opinion pronounces it so, nor will it extend its approbation over one step of his wild progress towards the place of encounter. If he fears an imputation of cowardice, in case of a refusal, his fears are groundless, for the public voice never did, and never will cry coward, or villain, unless the man has pre-

viously shown himself such. If it is possible for any person to be under the necessity of meeting his antagonist, it is only that man, who has previously possessed no claims to spirit, or magnanimity; and whose mock courage in this hour of his extremity, so far from conferring these claims, will be considered as the result of a necessity brought about by his previous irresolution and baseness. So that this last, *only* effort of the poor creature to obtain a reputation for courage, will excite no notice, any farther than it contradicts his whole previous character. A person of this description only, is under the least necessity, or has the least apology for accepting a challenge; and he is more properly an object of pity and contempt, than of dignified animadversion. He has lived without character, and he may die without regret, and leave his place to be occupied, it is hoped, by a man who will not disgrace his species. There is no circumstance in his death that should excite our sorrow, but there is one at which our feelings ought to revolt, and that is, his falling by the hand of a fellow-being. Although we may have long considered him an afflictive dispensation upon us, yet we ought to endure the calamity, rather than be relieved in precisely this manner. But if he will go, we are not accountable; and a regard for the public welfare does not compel us to dissuade him; for what may be his calamity, will most certainly be our relief. And were all his comrades to follow his example, in many instances, no public loss would be sustained, and the morals of the community might be improved, slightly to be sure, for happily the insignificance of these men, leaves us little to fear from the contami-

nating influence of their example. Should these men in their affairs of honour disappear in crowds, we have common ground enough in which to inter them, common stones enough to moulder over their bones, and common sense enough to let them lie in undisturbed forgetfulness.

By what unaccountable considerations are these men of single combat induced to throw away their lives; in many instances the only thing which they possess, for which they have just occasion to congratulate themselves? O their *honour*!—their *honour* has been pricked, and that too in the “nicest point!” How can they be insensible to the bleeding wound, inflicted upon this very vitality of sensitiveness! How can they sustain themselves unaffected, while their reputation is bleeding to death under the inflictions of calumny! How can they stand unmoved, and see their characters falling around them in fragments! The oak blasted in mid-summer, its beautiful foliage falling all yellow to earth, yet still extending its branches, where lately verdure dwelt so freshly, the trunk itself almost deserted by the vital principle, and becoming a prey to the worm, and to the more voracious bird, that has come to hunt for that worm, no freshness at the root, no dew upon the top, and nothing heard through its desolate branches but the complainings of the disconsolate owl,—this noble, majestic tree, thus falling, without an eye to witness its desolation, or a heart to sigh over its process of decay, is but a faint emblem of him, who with his *honour* gone—is now going himself to that sad bourne.

from which, neither his honour, nor himself, will ever return!

Surely hard must be that heart, that would compel a man to survive his *honour*; or forbid him even to commit suicide, if he cannot die a natural death. For who would compel him to continue a life, that would be of no happiness to himself, or benefit to others? Who would hold him here in contempt and derision, to “grunt and sweat and fardels bear, when with a bare bodkin, he himself, can his quietus make.” His *honour* is dead—stabbed to the quick—twice defunct; and why keep *him* lingering here in disgrace; and compel him to support a life, that is a burden to himself, and of no possible advantage to community? And if he cannot “screw his courage to the sticking place,” and be his own executioner, then let us in common charity allow him, if he will do it according to the laws of *honour*, to call forth the person who has despoiled him of his fair name, now to finish the work. Meanwhile, agreeably to the laws of *honour*, which govern in those cases, his destroyer must stand a blowing himself; so we have a chance of getting rid of two cowards at a single tilt,—pardon us—not two *cowards*, for they dare to kill each other,—of two fools,—excuse us—not two fools—for they have wisdom to discover that the world can get along just as well without them: we shall get rid of two men of *honour*,—or rather they will get rid of themselves,—we shall *lose* them,—sad loss!—deplorable loss!—Let nature make a pause—an awful pause—prophetic of her end!

But as some of these men are disposed to cast a

mock solemnity over this farcical affair; we shall be excused if we look at it a little more seriously. Some person has unfortunately indulged his wit at their expense; or in the heat of passion cast out a bitter invective: or it may be has deliberately exposed their weakness, or depravity. All this occurred perhaps within the limits of the domestic circle, and would never have been known beyond it, had it not been brought forth, and published to the world, by the person so slightly affected. Or it may have occurred in the hall of legislation, but among the mightier interests which are agitated there, would have been forgotten, had it not been called up by the subject of the remarks, and reiterated again and again upon the patience of the house, till the attention which the man has drawn upon the subject by his own clamour, renders a process of opposition now necessary, that would in the first place have been ridiculous. And we are warranted in saying, that in many instances, the wound which the complainant pretends has been inflicted upon his fair reputation, would never have been so much as discovered by the public, but for a determination on the part of the person affected, to make it an occasion of bringing himself into public notice. He cries, there is a wound on my reputation, a blot upon my character, and begins to unfold himself, till at length a wound and blot are in fact discovered, but whether they have been inflicted by himself, or another, is the only question that awakens the least interest. The public expect to judge for themselves in this matter; nor will they be very deeply concerned for him, who is under the necessity of pub-

lishing his own loss of character; nor will they be very industrious in patching up a reputation, which the man has himself destroyed. So that this hue and cry after the robber of character, unless it results in the apprehension of those who raise it, passes by with merited indifference; for where there is the greatest uproar, there is usually the least danger.

These men of sensitive honour, plead in justification of a duel, the reflections that may be cast upon their courage. But who considers this meeting of personal jealousy and hatred, a test of true courage? —nobody. The public regard it as a private quarrel; where noble generous sentiments yield to bitter personalities, and where passion triumphs over reason. If there were nothing in the affair to excite notice, but considerations connected with courage, it would pass by in silent contempt. This noise about *courage*, is a thing got up by the parties concerned: they cry courage, exchange usually very harmless shots; a few bravadoes look on, and a few fools applaud. But the community at large, if they *know* any thing about it, *care* nothing about it. To be sure, here and there, an emotion of pity may be awakened, and here and there, the gravity of a muscle disturbed. But so far from considering this affair as a test of true courage, we smile at his simplicity who suggests such an idea. Every class of men in the community have too much sense, not to understand this trick of mock valour. The farce has been played too often to excite curiosity or surprise. Every scene in the play is familiar as the features of a family cur. The actors play for their own sport, and whether they are *behind*

or *before* the curtain, is a matter of no consequence. Those who adopt this method of bringing themselves into notice, realize for their pains only mortification, or death!

They are not of that consequence in the world, which they had supposed. They no doubt expected by this affair of *honour*, to fix upon themselves the attention and sympathies of the whole nation. But so far from this, it has not been honoured with even a dignified animadversion: here and there a sneer may have been cast upon it; but men at large, have been pursuing their usual occupations, with minds as totally engrossed, as though nothing had occurred of greater consequence, than a scuffle in the street, or a cock-fight in the barn-yard. To be sure, here and there a newspaper editor, to furnish occasion for a ludicrous remark of his own, or for the sake of exciting a little wonder in the nursery, has told the farcical tale in his columns. But while he did it, he laughed in his sleeves, as he thought of the ominous look, and solemn tone, with which the beldam would rehearse it to her astonished brood.

We half reprove ourselves, for having permitted a light remark to escape us on a practice, fraught with so much guilt, disgrace, and misery. It is too odious and appalling for merriment: too desperate and disastrous for satirical levity; and even grave irony seems misplaced. But the variety of character which it assumes; and the absurdity of its pretensions, must be our apology. There are some vices which are checked more by a sneer, than a sage rebuke. But we have

words of a deep and solemn import, which we shall summon in their appropriate place.

We have previously laid it down, as an acknowledged requisition in true courage, that the object to be gained, must be of sufficient importance to warrant the sacrifice it may cost. If our preceding remarks are correct, the object which the duellist proposes to himself falls short of this character. We look in vain for a motive, that justifies him in putting his life at hazard, that warrants him in jeopardizing every interest this side the loathsome grave. We say that life is an invaluable gift from God, and when we expose it to immediate, final destruction, there should be some imperious necessity, some mighty urgency, some vast interest pending. We cannot find these with the duellist, we cannot find them in his self-respect, his high sense of honour, his allegiance to truth, his hatred to falsehood and scandal, nor in the apprehended scorn and derision of a corrupt age. For courage, veracity, and exalted worth, are not the qualities which are vindicated in a duel. He mistakes his own conduct. He puts all at hazard upon the strength of false conclusions. He acts upon a principle which no man of sense acknowledges.

We therefore renounce him, as rash and weak; we withdraw our confidence from him, as from a man deficient in practical wisdom; as wanting that sagacity, which penetrates the motive of an action, and ascertains its value. We cannot bring down our notions of courage, as associated with the daring, sublime and excellent in human character, and connect them with

conduct that is blind to consequences, and indifferent to results; and which sacrifices the claims of God and human nature, to the gratification of a selfish passion, or a revengeful pique.

A man of true courage, will not violate the dictates of his conscience and reason.

A violation of conscience and reason, proceeds either from the internal promptings of the individual himself, or from the influence of others. If it proceeds from the impulses of his own heart, it evinces a subjugation to passion, a depth of depravity, and a blindness to consequences, which sink the man into the lowest scale of rational and moral being.

Suppose, what rarely, if ever happens, that a person of this description, has performed an action which is regarded by many as an expression of true courage. To what are we to attribute this action? To profound reflection, to sober conviction, to unalterable purpose? Or, are we to find its source, in the fever of momentary excitement, in the blind rush of sheer recklessness? As the man is not under the jurisdiction of his conscience and reason, we must attribute it to the influence of those passions, which never fail to govern, when these noble principles of our nature are violated. This action then, so far from conferring indisputable claims to courage, only shows that the passions of a man, who is under no allegiance to his conscience or reason, and the public welfare, may terminate for once upon the same object. And if we consider this fortunate coincidence, as a proof of true courage, then the lunatic may rise to that distinction.

But if this violation of conscience and reason, pro-

ceeds from the influence of others, it not only shows that the convictions and judgment of the man, have nothing to do with his actions; it also shows that he is the slave of public opinion, the tool of party interest; and what he shall think, what he shall say, and what he shall do, must be determined by the feelings and management of others. He is entirely a passive being; without volition, or purpose, or action of his own. He is a mere machine, that must move in any direction, in which the impelling power happens to operate. We might with as much propriety, ascribe courage to the destructive course of a missile, as to the conduct of such a man. That man then only, who implicitly follows the dictates of his conscience and reason, has in our apprehension, a claim to true courage.

Let us apply this test to the conduct of the Duellist. Does he follow the dictates of his conscience and reason? Here is a man who has inadvertently, or perhaps intentionally, wounded his feelings, and injured his reputation. But has he forfeited his life, by this offence? Is it a crime that merits death? Will no punishment, but the heaviest within the power of man to inflict, meet the merits of the case? Is not the total and irretrievable destruction of the delinquent, too sweeping a penalty? a doom too terrible, for calm justice to sanction, or unimpassioned reason to inflict? We say it is. Heaven cries against it from above, the grave from beneath, conscience from within. There is not one sober principle in the human breast, that does not revolt at its iniquitous severity. The man who decrees this sentence, and carries it into exe-

cution, looks in vain for a justifying circumstance. The fact that he exposes his own life, does not relieve his conduct. He may jeopardize, yea sacrifice his own existence, but this does not justify him in destroying the life of a fellow-being. He stands in the light of one who plunges a dagger into the heart of his adversary, and then sheathes it in his own breast. The last act, is no atonement for the first.

But if this were the fact, is it in his place to execute the penalty? We would say to the man, who challenges into his presence the delinquent for the purpose of effecting his destruction—pause and reflect, before you commit the fatal deed; calculate the ruinous consequences; let the calamitous effects pass before you; close not your eyes to that long array of dark, disastrous results! The man before you is a fellow-being—and have you no forgiveness?—He has some kindly feelings,—and will you quench them for ever?—He has some pleading virtues,—and will you put them to death?—He has fond, confiding friends,—and will you stab them to the heart?—He has venerable, affectionate relatives,—and will you bring them down in sorrow to the grave?—He is himself a moral, accountable being,—and will you hurry him to the Judgment-seat uncalled?—Stop!—it is the voice of God!—“THOU SHALT NOT KILL.” Enough—he that can resist these dissuasions, and dare this awful mandate, can feel nothing, and fear nothing, but his damnation at the bar of Christ!

Hark!—it is done! There lies the bleeding, dying victim, at the feet of his cold blooded murderer! If this is conscience, and reason—God preserve us!

As this surviving wretch plods his sullen way from the spot, now reeking with the warm blood of his companion, he presents a spectacle, at which even a fallen spirit might shudder.

And shall he come back again into our warm embrace? Shall he step within the hallowed precincts of friendship and affection? Shall he invest his leprosy with our confidence and esteem? Shall he lay his blood-stained hand upon the ark of power—and insult his Maker in mockery of an oath?

Though this being of such unrelenting cruelty, such high handed daring, such open contempt of every obligation, human and divine, may find a resting place, in the frailties of our nature, yet where will he appear, when summoned into the presence of infinite holiness, inflexible Justice! We will not forestall his doom! We will not attempt to sketch the horrors that must awaken in his breast, when the victim of his hatred and cruelty shall witness against him at the bar of God.

Though his conduct, who accepts a challenge, may fall short of his antagonist's in depravity, it does not in weakness. He accepts the proposals, because he dares not face what he apprehends may be public opinion. Instead of reposing upon the energies of his own mind, and sustaining himself upon the strength of his deep convictions, and independent purposes, he descends from this noble elevation; he basely bows to the clamours of the "paltry few," and surrenders himself to cowardly fear. He throws away a life which God had given him for the noblest purposes, with a solemn charge to keep it till he should see fit

to remand the trust. But instead of this, he betrays his Maker's confidence, destroys his life, and rushes uncalled, into the presence of his final Judge. O inconsistent cowardice! O blind infatuation! He that could not lift up his head against the sneers of human weakness, how shall he now meet the frowning aspect of Omnipotence! He that could not withstand the maledictions of erring man, how shall he endure the displeasure of a righteous God!

Far be it from us to judge him. But he goes to the Judgment-seat, a suicide!—unless the tears of his dying agony, have drenched that sin in penitential sorrow.

If then to exercise the most savage cruelty; if to satiate the darkest revenge; if to imbrue our hands in the blood of a fellow-being, and to sacrifice the life, which God has given us, upon the altar of passion, be not consistent with reason and conscience,—then the duellist violates these noble principles of his nature: and his pretensions to courage are built upon their wreck. Such a courage, is one at which Heaven weeps,—and Hell wonders!

A man of true courage, is always cool and deliberate.

Place him in the most trying and overwhelming circumstances,—place him where the life of thousands, or the fate of an empire, must depend upon the issue of his determinations. From the conflicting circumstances around him, he retires within himself,—he rises upon his collected energies, till he obtains an elevation, that quietly overlooks the convulsed elements beneath. There, in fixed serenity, he holds in full survey, the extremities of the agitated scene. He

marks the struggles of interest, and difficulty; motive, and despair. If passion stirs, it is hushed. If his breast heaves, it is tranquilized again. If his heart throbs, it must be still; for reason is supreme in this awful hour of dread decision. His vision is not confined to the present. The lightning of his mind glances through the future, and seems to kindle upon the impenetrable veil of Eternity. The immediate event of the fearful commitment—now—appears in luminous certainty; but from that determinate point, his thoughts hold their steady march, through a long train of doubtful consequences and remote results, which are the foundations of his unalterable decision.

During this long and difficult process to his fixed determination, the continuance, or destruction of his own life, was ever submitted to the interest of the mighty whole. The tenour and direction of his thoughts and purposes, would never have varied, though they had gone across his grave. And perhaps they have,—but that is a circumstance, for which he has no individual concern. The only question is, do the mighty interests now pending require it: and he does not feel at liberty to entertain a wish, a thought, or purpose, that does not harmonize with the incontrovertible decision.

This is true courage. Here is an object that warrants, and transcends the sacrifice it may cost. Here are the sanctions of conscience, the decisions of reason. Here is cool reflection; fixed determination.

Such a general, is a general indeed; such an opponent, is an opponent in reality. And woe to the reckless tyrant, woe to the unreflecting chieftain,

that comes within the sweep of his plans and purposes! He comes within the awful range of courage. He comes within the sepulchral strait of a Thermopylæ. He comes where every foot-step must be the grave of thousands; where the dying and the dead, will be the hearse of the living; and where, if *he* survives, it will be to tell a most disastrous tale!

O how unlike to this, is that mock courage, which effervesces from the rashness of the duellist! Where is his noble, transcendent object, calling for the sacrifice it may cost? Where are the sanctions of his conscience, the dictates of his reason? Where is his cool deliberation, his deep drift of reflection? He may be deliberate, but it is the deliberation of fixed madness, unalterable revenge! He may be cool, but it is the coolness of that ice into which his heart is frozen! He may be tranquil, but it is the tranquillity of moral death!

He is irreclaimably fastened to his fell purpose. No motives can dissuade him, no arguments deter him. Opposition only renders him more clamorous and obstinate. The dark determination has seized his soul, led captive his judgment, and bound him to its object so firmly that death alone can dissolve the union. This is his calm directness of character. It consists in an uninquiring obstinacy—an obstinacy that cannot be counselled, that will not be controlled, that is blind to the strongest probabilities, that is deaf to every friendly admonition, dead to every dissuasive appeal, and upon which argument and demonstration, exert as little influence, as sunbeams on the headlong course of the torrent. It cannot be otherwise. We

have too many confirming facts around us, to admit of our coming to a different conclusion. We have seen men go into these conflicts, against the acknowledged dictates of conscience, the sober decisions of reason, the manifest claims of interest, the earnest entreaties, and loud remonstrances of friends,—and over every obstacle which, heaven, earth and hell could cast in their way.

That a certain kind of coolness, and deliberation, may exist in connexion with all this untractable obstinacy, we are not disposed to question. But their existence here, forms the most terrible feature in the man's whole character. They give tranquillity to his frightful purpose, permanency to his rash resolve, undeviating conduct to the paroxysms of a persecuting hatred, and a fatal certainty to the final action. But under these manifestations, they reflect no honour, or semblance of courage that the assassin may not claim, who can direct his knife with steadiness to the palpitating bosom of his victim.

That deliberation which is connected with exalted courage, is of an inquiring, reflecting character. It questions motives, it consults difficulties, it looks at consequences, and demands an undoubted expediency. It seeks new light, new information,—endeavours to comprehend the present, to penetrate the future,—it delays not because it fears to act, but because it would not act rashly,—not because it is deficient in noble daring, but because it will not proceed upon groundless presumption. This questioning deliberation, is one of the most valuable attributes of courage. It prevents the mistakes and calamities, which result

from precipitate conduct,—and while it imparts assurance to our measures, it overawes those of our adversary. This quality, however, is not an ingredient in the character of the duellist. Would to God it were,—it would be the preservation of his innocence, and the destruction of his pernicious creed. It would put an end to that practice, which commenced in guilt and ignorance; and which a desperate malevolence has perpetuated.

We have carried our remarks, on the subject of courage, to a greater length than we anticipated. But the claims of the duellist to this noble quality, have been so confidently asserted, and so loudly trumpeted, and form so essential a part of his proud pretensions, we deemed them worthy of particular notice; and called to them a more patient attention than we otherwise should have done. Unless however a blind, causeless hazard of life, a senseless indifference to death, and a subjugation of the whole man to the purposes of reckless revenge, constitute a claim to courage, then this quality is not an attribute of the duellist; and the splendours which associations with courage have cast over this practice are false—false as the light that hovers over the abode of mortal corruption.

The Duellist is not only deficient in true courage, but in a manly independence of character.

The most important event of his life, is made to depend upon the opinion of others. The question whether he shall accept, or reject the challenge sent him, is one that may involve the most disastrous consequences to himself and his connexions, and yet he

allows others to decide this momentous question for him; and abides their decision, though at war with every sentiment of his breast.

He is not conscious of having committed a crime, that merits death, or that calls for a very humiliating atonement. He has inadvertently, perhaps, exposed the weakness, or wickedness of a bustling pretender, who determines to punish this freedom by personal violence. And yet this man, whose only crime is that of being honest, consents to expiate this offence with his death; and permits a renegade from humanity and justice, to trample him into the grave. He dares not assert his own rights: he dares not encounter the sneers and affected derision of men. He says, if I reject this proposal, if I refuse to meet my adversary, it may be the means of perpetuating my existence, but it will bring upon me an insupportable torrent of scorn. I shall be regarded as a spiritless, pusillanimous wretch. My reputation, influence and happiness, will be destroyed at once and forever! I shall be the laughingstock of the multitude, the hiss and by-word of the crowd, deserted by my friends, despised by my enemies,—O annihilation were preferable to this! It is in vain to contend with public opinion, however absurd. There is no hope in a contest carried on single-handed against the world! Other men eminent for their virtues, and situated as I am, have shrunk from the unequal conflict. There are no successful precedents, to which I can appeal, and from which I can gather hope and resolution. It is recorded, irrevocably recorded in the high court of honour, from which there is no appeal, that a man

shall stand responsible for his conduct, to the individual, who may call him to an account, and shall submit to such terms as his adversary proposes. It is in vain to contend with this decision, or to question its equity. It is irresistible in its force, and universal in its application; and in bowing to its authority, I yield to a necessity for which I am not responsible, and to which I bequeath my dying anathema. Under the impulse of these feelings, he meets his practised antagonist,—he meets him to be sacrificed, and falls—deprecating, with his expiring breath, the rashness and folly of his conduct.

What weakness and irresolution are here! What a want of dignified, manly independence! What an absence of that courage which sustains itself upon the righteousness of its cause, upon deep conviction, and individual purpose! What an exhibition of reluctant submission—of complaining, crouching compliance—and of slavish subjection to a custom, equally irrational and pernicious,—a custom that would disparage a community of outlaws and maniacs.

We admire that strength, that enlightened independence of character, which elevates a man above the range of vulgar passion—which renders him in a measure indifferent to popular prejudice—which makes him a stranger to enervating fears—which prepares him to encounter deadly opposition—which binds him to his individual purpose—and enables him to hold on his way, steady and strong, through sneers and frowns, and persecutions. But this sterling quality is not possessed by the man, who consents to fight a duel. It forms no portion of his character. It is a

want of it, that leaves him at the mercy of the multitude;—and casts him upon the conflicting currents of human opinion, like a rudderless bark upon a fickle tide.

This want of independent, fearless determination of character, is not confined to the question of the meeting, but is pitifully apparent in the meeting itself. The conduct of the parties in the final conflict, is that of men brought to an issue which they little anticipated, which they have gone too far to avoid, and which they meet with great *fear* and *trembling*. That flourish of feeling, which distant danger created, dies away in the stern reality; and even ordinary strength and steadiness, falter and faint in this unwonted jeopardy. Notwithstanding all the precautions of dress and position, it seems as if every muscle and nerve had for once refused to do its office. The hands are tremulously truant to their occupation; the insurrectionary heart knocks against its confined enclosures; the loosened knees, like Belshazzar's, smite one against the other; the difficult respiration ebbs back upon its fountain, to gush again with a violence that ends in faintness; and the whole man in every movement, look and limb, evinces the presence of a fear that amounts to agony. Hence it is, that so many of these revengeful conflicts end in smoke. The fatal determinations of the combatants, are frustrated by the trembling anxieties of self-preservation. Their boasted skill seems capable only of a random effort, that is as likely to destroy a friend as a foe. Were our opinion of these deadly weapons, confined to their execution in the hands of duellists, we should

consider them the most treacherous instruments that human ingenuity ever invented.

Happily for those who settle their differences in this terrified manner, the adjustment is veiled from the public eye. The evasive shifts, the anxious expedients, the trembling resorts, and deceptive managements, are observed only by those, who have too much regard for the *craft* to give them publicity. Were the conduct of the opponents in this dire extremity, witnessed by the public, it would do more to bring the practice of duelling into contempt, than volumes of sarcastic wit and burning satire. No man would think of reviving the scouted custom, who had any character that the halter or gibbet could sacrifice.

We could wish for the welfare of society, that these meetings of recreant animosity were public spectacles. Sentiments connected with the degradation of human nature in these exhibitions, might indeed prevent our attendance; but the pugnacious clan would all be present, and have an opportunity of witnessing that conduct, upon which they now bestow their blind plaudits. The more reflecting among them, would be reminded of an irresolute Macbeth—addressing the language of desperation and terror to a visionary sword. The more gay would think only of a blustering Falstaff—hacking his blade, as if it had clashed desperately in the fight, and crimsoning himself from his own veins, as with the blood of uncompromising valour. The wag alone would encore the performance.

It is the occasional sad ending of these clan-come-

dies, that prevents unqualified merriment. The farce has sometimes a tragical close; and it is this alone that induces us to dignify it with a rebuke. We cannot laugh egregiously, when the object of our mirth is within the reach of danger, nor when he is contracting guilt. Remove these dampers and checks, and duelling would become the jest of the world. Men would laugh at the mention of her name; and snicker in their sleep, as she swaggered upon their dreaming vision.

We would not say that every man who fights a duel, manifests a cowardly, ridiculous conduct. There is a degree of anger which forgets the precautions of self-preservation, in the reckless pursuit of its object. There is an intensity of hatred, which winds up a man to the single execution of his fell purpose. All the malignant feelings of the individual, may have mingled into one dark current, which flows too deep and strong to be ruffled. But in most cases, all the shifts, anxieties and trembling precautions, which we have mentioned, are practised, and to an extent that, under any other circumstances, would brand a man with infamous cowardice. And the only reason they here fail of having this effect, is the concealment under which they are carefully couched.

The Duellist evinces an erroneous apprehension of public opinion, and a limited knowledge of character.

He supposes that his sentiments are in accordance with those entertained by the more elevated part of mankind; that his conduct is tacitly approved by all men of stern intellectual prowess; and that every man of real spirit and character, would act in similar cir-

cumstances, as *his* high feelings now dictate. In all this he is egregiously mistaken. His sentiments are a deplorable exception to those entertained by most men. His conduct, so far from being countenanced by men of exalted intelligence, receives their direst execrations. Where he can find one individual of any worth who, in similar circumstances would act as he does, we could name ten thousand of substantial excellence, who would regard such conduct with scorn and horror, and who would avoid it as they would the brand of deepest infamy.

Mankind have not yet sunk so far beneath the dignity of their nature, that they will consent to meet every brawling wretch upon his own level; nor are they so lost to a sense of their moral obligations, that they will imbrue their hands in the blood of a human being, however worthless and odious. The duellist stands alone in his craft, and despised in his character. His crimes have degraded him beneath the respect of the world; and his cruelties have banished him beyond the reach of its sympathies. He may perhaps enjoy the friendship of a few, as selfish and malevolent as himself; and if these can relieve his desolate hours, he is welcome to their consolations.

The sympathy of these subalterns, or seconds as they are called, would be regarded as an insult, by any but the fallen object on whom it is bestowed. Acting without responsibility these menials become more zealous than their masters; and carry their leaders' plans into every ridiculous and shameful excess. A little feud, that would have passed away with the occasion that gave it birth, is caught up by these re-

tainers, magnified and heated, till the spark becomes a broad quenchless flame, and the parties are arraigned against each other for life and death.

But for the fiery agency of these irresponsible subalterns, a duel would seldom take place; and much less seldom terminate fatally. They seem to take an infernal delight in bringing the matter to the most disastrous issue possible. They are not satisfied, even when the claims of their bloody code are answered. They wish to push their leaders to the direst extremities; and labour to defeat any attempt at reconciliation, till the grave has one of the principals, and infamy the other.

These slaves adopt all the malignity of their masters, and share deeply in their guilt, without a particle of their peril, or dignity. Their devotion expresses itself in the destruction of their leaders; and their courage, in the careful preservation of their own lives. They act without principle, and never hold themselves responsible for their conduct. They have nothing to expect from triumph, and nothing to fear from defeat. They recognize no law but the passions of their chief; no rule of conduct but the dictates of his pleasure. In their unqualified servility, they resemble a pimp, who administers to the gratifications of his employer, and reserves to himself the glorious consciousness of his exalted occupation.

The approbation of these menials is received by the principal as the voice of the nation. He regards their sanctions as the cordial consent of mankind. He considers himself surrounded by the organs of public opinion—by the great, the wise, the learned.

the influential, and honourable of the earth; when, take them as a body, a more unprincipled and worthless gang has seldom been permitted to exist. Before these, with a few others who echo their sentiments, the duellist bows; and we recognize in him at once, the master and the slave; the ruler and the ruled; the worshipped and the worshipper. The recreant crowd around him admire his heroic virtues, and he admires their intelligence. They shout him on to his bloody work, and he goes delirious with adulation. They point out his path, and he thinks of no other way. They dictate his conduct, and he thinks only of compliance. They anticipate his final action, and he prays that they may not be disappointed. In all this, he labours under a mortifying mistake, which is chargeable only to his weakness and vanity. He supposes that the shouts and dictates which he hears, are from the lips of countless multitudes, when in fact they are only the breathings of a little captious assemblage. He regards himself as borne upon the great tide of public sentiment, when he is only moving on the wake that frets through the feelings of a contemptible community. He deems himself upon a broad and glittering ocean, when he is afloat upon a little pond, where every movement mingles the miry bottom with the putrid wave.

The public opinion, therefore, of which he prates so loudly, and with which he glories in a compliance, and before which he prostrates himself, and offers up his life, is only the practice of a pugnacious clan,—the custom of a few desperadoes, and the connivance of a few others, who are dazzled by any thing daring

and desperate in character. In mistaking the opinion of this little clan for the sentiments of mankind, he evinces an ignorance and a feebleness of discrimination which prevents our respect. And we are at a loss, whether to consider him more properly an object of severe censure, or of that pitying forbearance which displeasure is sometimes called upon to exercise towards the delinquent. We may however, without the charge of wanton vindictiveness, leave him to his professed admirers; their exclusive companionship, we were about to say, will be an ample punishment; for even their tender mercies are cruel.

As for the public, they do not countenance duelling. They abhor the practice. They denounce it as weak, wicked, and pernicious. No man can be engaged in one of these private combats, without sinking himself in their estimation. They have established laws for the protection of character, and the redress of injuries. They deem these laws adequate to the purposes for which they were created; nor will they see them discarded with impunity. If they do not suspend the offender from the scaffold, or immure him in a dungeon, they will withdraw their confidence and protection from him. They will virtually desert him, as he has deserted them. And thus bring upon him a retribution, as much to be dreaded as the solitude and dismal silence of a cell.

They may indeed permit him to remain in their service; they may unwisely continue him in a responsible employment; but it is not out of respect to him; it is to answer their own purposes. They retain him on the same principle that a master retains an un-

principled slave—for the sake of his labour. They keep however a suspicious watch over him, and depend for the rectitude of his conduct upon their own vigilance, rather than the correctness of his dispositions. They have no cordial interest in his welfare, that would induce them to retain him in their service an hour longer than their interest dictated. For ourselves, we would dismiss him at once and forever. He should suffer an immediate and exemplary punishment, although the infliction encroached upon our interests. But though judgment lingers, it is *sure* ; and the delay, so far from mitigating, will only aggravate its severity. Like a torrent, it will come with greater force, for a temporary obstruction. Even his memory will be rank with the guilt of his profession.

The duellist is wanting in generous magnanimous sentiments.

The injury which he has received, and which he is determined to punish with death, is in most cases, of a character that may be forgiven, or passed over in silence, without effecting his reputation in the mind of the public. There are no possible constructions of a public character that render a challenge necessary, or expedient. Whatever the result of such a meeting may be, it cannot exculpate him of the charge in question. It will not in the least affect his innocence or guilt in public opinion. The verdict of this nation will never be suspended upon the fact, or effects of the rencounter. The influence of this meeting, therefore, in establishing the justice or injustice of the charge alleged, can furnish no motive for such extreme conduct. The fatal process is dictated by a spirit of re-

venge. The man conceives that his honour has been invaded, and he determines to punish the aggression in the heaviest manner possible. His pride is wounded, and he determines to take ample satisfaction. His feelings are deeply irritated, and he determines to reek his unqualified revenge upon the hapless offender.

For a show of liberality, he demands an explanation, but the insolent tone in which he does it, intentionally defeats the object. Instead of coming to an open manly conference on the subject, he sets himself to writing vituperative letters,—little angry billets, in which he praises himself, and insults his adversary. He scorns a frank explanation; a conciliatory, dignified defence; but stoops to low invective, spiteful vituperation, and slanderous personalities. By this conduct, he widens the breach, magnifies the offence, exasperates the offender, and gives an air of importance and necessity to the disastrous issue. We speak not of those who sputter a challenge, because they are jostled in the crowd, neglected in the drawing-room, or noodled at the theatre. We have nothing to say of such creatures; their punishment is to be what they are; and their reformation is as unimportant, as it is hopeless. We speak of those who act not without some premeditation, and the plea of some sensible grievance. And we hesitate not in saying, that in a vast majority of instances, these personal hostilities result from misapprehension; and their fatal termination might be prevented by a dignified conciliatory procedure. But where there is a disposition to pervert what is right, and exaggerate what is wrong,

to exculpate ourselves by criminating our adversary, there is but little prospect of reconciliation. The correspondence which ordinarily precedes a duel, furnishes a melancholy illustration of this truth. It is a pitiable exhibition of vanity and malignity; pride and hatred; self-adulation, falsehood and revenge. It is the first breathings of that spirit that has already begun to pant for its victim!

Humane dispositions, a forgiving temper, and all the melting charities of a kindly nature, are the derision of the duellist. They are associated in his mind with weakness and pusillanimity. He regards the man possessed of these amiable qualities, as destitute of spirit, wanting independence and intrepid determination of character. He would not exchange his lofty self-respect, for all the confiding affection and lenient tenderness, of which the human heart is capable. He prefers to live in cold abstraction from his fellow-beings. He will allow us to cast our sympathies over him, but he will not condescend to spread his over us. He is the oak around which the vine has permission to cling, and breathe its living fragrance. We may grant his frailties all the indulgences which our fallible nature can claim, but we are not to consider him under obligation to reciprocate the charity. We may bear and forbear with his faults, but ours are to be punished with death. Such is the generosity of the duellist,—a generosity that would sink the savage, and clothe with new terrors the brow of the marauding Arab.

The effect of a duelling spirit, on the heart that nourishes it, is of a most deplorable character. This

self-vindicating spirit, gradually destroys a man's confidence in the integrity, intelligence, and enlightened impartiality of those around him. He becomes accustomed to regard every injury as a private wrong, which he must redress himself. The public have no interest in it; no right of interference; it rests wholly between him and the offender. In this manner his confidence in the laws of his country, the virtue of the nation, and even in the pledges of sincere friendship is diminished and destroyed. His distrust degenerates into misanthropy. He confines himself within the circle of his own interests, and forgets the great claims of humanity. From the broad and almost boundless range of human sympathies and affections he voluntarily withdraws; and shuts himself up to the single consciousness of his own existence. He takes no interest in the vast benevolent enterprises of the day—enterprises which mingle into one sublime purpose, that kindles upon the human heart, awakens its deepest feelings, enlists its strongest sympathies, calls for its most intense desires, and binds to itself the moral energies of the world. We do not say that an indifference to all these great and generous themes is at once the portion of the duellist. But his selfish, retaliating spirit will at length entail it upon him. And he will heed as little the lofty generous enterprises that kindle upon the moral world, as a caverned bear the luminous expanse of the glittering heaven. The spirit which he fosters has this tendency, and if the fosterage is persevered in, will have this effect. His heart will become too cold and selfish for a warm, generous sentiment: we might as well look for tropi-

cal fruits in Greenland; or jessamine on the eternal glacier.

Yet the duellist talks to us of his magnanimity, candour and generosity, and rests upon these pretensions, his claims to our respect. Were he but as free of all exceptionable qualities, as he is of these, we would almost get down on our knees and worship him as a specimen of human perfectibility. If to get angry at a passing remark,—if to swell a trifling offence into a capital crime—and to kill—when he ought to forgive, be samples of magnanimity, candour and generosity, then the duellist is indeed possessed of these virtues. But if his are the only exhibitions we are to witness of them, we sincerely hope he will take them along with him to the grave, and that they may never have a resurrection this side of hell.

The Duellist deserts the claims of his Country, his Connexions, and his God.

His Country has claims upon him of a high order. She fostered and protected his infancy; rendered his life and property sacred. She presented him with the opportunities of education; of moral and religious instruction. She surrounded him with the blessings of civil order, peace and harmony. She placed within his enjoyments, the delights of social intercourse, confidence and affection. She pledged him a continuance of these inestimable blessings, so long as he should be found worthy. In return, she requires his services: not perhaps in the cabinet or field; but in the quiet and diligent performance of his duties as a worthy citizen, and devoted patriot. She requires him to practise the virtues suitable to the situation in

which he is placed, and consonant with his various relations to mankind. She expects him to be honest in his dealings, industrious in his habits, elevated and virtuous in his conduct. She requires that he should hold himself in constant readiness to meet her call in any pressing emergency, and that he should be prepared to bring all his faculties into her service, and surrender his life to her disposal.

Nor are these requisitions unreasonable. A compliance is only a just acknowledgment of benefits received. If he is an American, and can be callous to these claims, how might thousands have felt, who have nevertheless sacrificed themselves upon the altar of their country. How might the modern Greek feel, whose only inheritance is bondage, but who girds to himself the desperate weapons of a burning, devoted soul. And how might our ancestors have felt, who had little themselves to lose, but who bled and died for the welfare of their posterity. These exalted men did not measure their devotion by their national privileges; they did not stop to ascertain the precise extent of their public obligations; it was sufficient for them to know that their country was in danger, and they allowed her claims upon them an energy, that bore them around like an uncomplying necessity. Devoted men, consecrated spirits, martyred patriots! would to God their mantle had descended upon us!—that enough of their spirit had lingered among their children, to shame that selfishness, which forgets the claims of country, and throws away a life upon the mean purposes of revenge!

How degraded is the duellist by the side of that Pa-

triot, who binds himself for life, and death, to the interests of his country. How mean and contemptible his spirit, when brought in connexion with that enlarged philanthropy, that founded our institutions; and that lofty devotion that achieved our independence. We regard the one with emotions of pride, and veneration; the other with shame and abhorrence. The duellist deserts his country, renounces her claims, and seeks a voluntary exile in an ignominious grave. But the sad immunities of the shroud do not exempt him from our reproach. He has brought himself to an untimely end, broken off his days, and wrecked our confidence. We cannot conceive how he can justify himself, unless it may be in a consciousness of utter incapacity to subserve the smallest interest of his country. If he will put in this humiliating plea, and establish its equity, we will let him sneak out of the world, and endeavour to forget that our nature was ever so degraded.

The duellist not only deserts the duties which he owes his country, but those which he owes his connexions. If his parents are still within the veil of human sufferance; if they have not already passed beyond the reach of his assiduities, he ought to administer to their comforts; and to alleviate the sorrows and privations, attendant upon the infirmities of age. This is a dictate of nature; and after all, but a faint requital of the ten thousand parental anxieties that hovered over his infancy; and of the exhausting solitudes that reared him amid night-watchings, privations and sufferings, which only a parent's affection could dictate, or a mother's devotion endure.

Upon these parents, who counted no efforts, no sacrifices too great, that promoted his happiness; and who now, perhaps, amid the infirmities of age, need his filial attentions, he turns his back; and embitters his unnatural ingratitude, with a crime that brings down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Perhaps he has a wife—a confiding companion, whom he allured to his side, by promises which he is now about to violate, and by pledges, which, by one rash act, he places forever beyond his power to redeem. He attracted her attention by the urbanity of his manners, and the charms of his conversation. He enlisted her feelings, by the expressions of a warm devotion. He won her unsuspecting heart, by the protestations of undying affection. He took her from parents whose hearts were bound up in her welfare,—from brothers who were ardently devoted to her happiness,—from friends who loved her as their own life. He brought her before the altar of Jehovah, and in the dread presence of his Maker, vowed to protect her, to administer to her wants, alleviate her sorrows, to promote her pleasures, and that he would *never*, while God should allow him being, desert her.

How does he discharge these obligations, which heaven and earth are called to witness? He abandons this confiding object of his vows; he betrays her to sorrow and want. The purpose of his treachery is not intimated to her. He dares not disclose the dark designs of his heart. Her burning tears, her impassioned appeals, her earnest admonitions might soften his heart and relax his determination. He

leaves her gay and unconscious; he steals from her sight; and in the fatal enjoyment of a selfish malignity, forgets the innocence he has betrayed, and the heart he has broken!

Perhaps he has deepened his crime still by a desertion of children—looking to him for protection, and dependant upon him for subsistence. He brought them into being, and was answerable for their support. Through every vicissitude of fortune, he should have been with them, to foster and protect them; and to train them up to a correct apprehension of their duties, and responsibilities. But he has shamefully deserted them; wickedly abandoned them to orphanage, helplessness and want. We could call around us a mournful group of these helpless, defenceless objects. But we forbear. The spectacle is too heart-rending even for our masculine dispositions. We would fain bury it from our sight; and banish from our heart the last remembrance of the cursed selfishness, that has entailed upon unoffending helplessness, so much want and misery.

We can pity the man, who plunders to support an indigent family. If stern justice overtake him, we can weep over his grave. But we have no tears for him who falls in a duel. Our sympathies will not linger at his grave. They wander to the parents he has forsaken; to the wife he has deserted; to the children he has rendered orphans. Others may talk of his temptations, kindle over his merits, and eulogize his memory; we shall not respond. Our most charitable language is, “as a fool dieth so died he.”

But the duellist betrays the confidence of his Ma-

ker. God called him into being, for some purpose worthy of infinite intelligence. He gave him an understanding above the brutes that perish,—a mind with faculties to scan the mighty, detect the minute; recall the past, comprehend the present, penetrate the future—that can reveal the mysteries of science, the hidden springs of knowledge—that can seize upon the beautiful, subject the giant elements to its purpose—that can range heaven and earth, exhaust reality, create superior loveliness and grandeur—and that can ascend, with true and steadfast vision, through every gradation of knowledge, till the broad circle of the universe lies beneath its clear, unclouded intelligence, and immortality crowns the glorious consummation. He gave him a nature, susceptible of the purest delights, the richest enjoyments,—a nature which every fresh experience might thrill with new pleasures, and wake it, as the fresh wind stirring a rich harp-string, to combinations of unwonted harmony. He gave him a soul stamped with his own unfading image,—a soul that shall survive the dissolution of these frames; live when the heavens and the earth are no more; and thrill with rapture through its enlarged capacities, when time is a forgotten dream.

With this mind of burning thought, and grasping intelligence—this nature of deep feeling, and divine enjoyment—this spirit of lofty aspirations, and immortal faculties—his Creator assigned him an existence here—binding him to the high interests of humanity, under responsibilities, at which an angel might tremble. These responsibilities he has wickedly betrayed. This intellect he has debased into a vassallage to

passion. This nature he has prostituted to purposes of selfish revenge; and this spirit, broken in its energies, and polluted with crime, he has insultingly sent back to its Maker. He has thus defeated forever the purposes of his existence. He has gone to his own place, a traitor to his God; a traitor to his country; a traitor to his friends; a traitor to his undying soul! And this declaration of his treachery and infamy, is the only record that should be found upon his grave stone.

We will not track the spirit, that has thus been untimely dislodged from its mortal tenement. We would not follow its desolate wanderings. We would not conjecture its final allotment. Profaned and polluted, where can it dwell; ruined and undone, where can it darkly hover, and wail out its miserable eternity!

The Duellist is guilty of murder.

Those who practise this fashionable vice, may confer upon it a less opprobrious epithet; but in the language of unerring truth, it is murder. The only cases in which life may be justifiably taken, are in self-defence, in rightful war, and when a public magistrate is called to this painful duty, in the discharge of his official functions. Aside from these cases, and the effects of the principle they involve, there is no possible combination of circumstances that justifies a man in depriving his fellow-being of life; none to which God lends his sanction: and the being who assumes this right, acts upon his own responsibility, and contrary to the express command of Jehovah.

The duellist will not contend that his conduct falls

within either of the foregoing provisions. He is not acting as a civil magistrate in the discharge of public duties. The affair is wholly of a private, personal character. Nor is he compelled to the destruction of a human being in self-defence. His life is not in jeopardy. Will he tell us that he is governed by motives connected with his reputation,—and that his honour is as dear to him as his life? We answer, the meeting will not vindicate his character; it will not obliterate one stain that may have been cast upon it; nor will it establish one tottering pretension. If he is charged with conduct unbecoming the gentleman and man of strict probity, he cannot shoot away the imputation. He cannot in this manner, shuffle off the infamy that has attached itself to him, whether justly or unjustly.

If he attempts to vindicate his conduct from the charge of murder, we ask him to produce his *strong reasons*; we require him to show us the *authority* upon which he acts. The destruction of a human being is not a matter to be trifled with; it is the heaviest calamity that can befall the sufferer. The infliction of an evil so tremendous, must be necessitated by circumstances of the most cogent character. We look around for these circumstances; we search for this imperious necessity; we cannot find it; and we call upon the man who acts upon its authority to bring it forth. This he cannot do; for it does not exist. The evil which he inflicts, is dictated more by wantonness than necessity. We entertain, ourselves, a high sense of honour, and are prepared to protect the little to which we may lay a just claim by all justifiable means.

But we are not the fools who attempt to wipe off an imaginary stain, by contracting a real one of ten times its blackness. We shall not commit a capital crime, for the sake of rescuing ourselves from the shadows of a transient scandal. We will not violate the laws of God and man, in compliance with a custom that has nothing to recommend itself but a reasoning madness. We rely upon our probity, our just claims, and the correct sentiments of mankind to sustain and protect us. If these will not do it, we do not expect to better our condition by any frenzied conflict with our adversaries.

This uproar, however, about honour and wounded reputation is a mere pretence—a shield beneath which the duellist endeavours to conceal his personal hostilities. It has nothing to do with the real motives of his conduct. He is actuated by jealousy, hatred and revenge. He determines to visit the object of his displeasure with the most terrible evil in his power: and in doing it, he disregards equity, and tramples upon the common rights of man. The spirit of retaliation, which is nourished in his heart, gathers strength, till it obtains an ascendancy over his better feelings; and at length it subjects to itself the roused up energies of the whole man. This fell purpose, single and predominant, makes no compromise with feebler and milder dispositions; it must be gratified to the entire extent of its inhuman demands. It claims the life blood of its victim, and gorges itself, heeding as little the pangs of the sufferer, as a harpy the writhings of its bleeding prey.

It is in vain to tell us of considerate efforts to ob-

viate the meeting, to mitigate or postpone its horrors. The circumstances may have been arranged with the most hesitating formality—with many secret misgivings, and apparent regrets—yet with the most deliberate purpose to kill—to dash in pieces this workmanship of the Almighty—and to send the reluctant spirit to the agonies of its final retribution!

Nor is the guilt of the transaction diminished, or its calamitous effects relieved by any preceding formalities. As well might the robber plead in palliation of his crime, the circuitous route by which he reached his victim. The house which the duellist has wrapped in mourning, is not the less gloomy; nor the wife whom he has widowed, the less disconsolate; nor the children that he has rendered fatherless, the less helpless, on account of the doubts, hesitations, and faltering delays that characterized the horrid transaction. Nor will the procurer of all this misery, find in these delaying circumstances a refuge from the reproaches of outraged humanity. Thank God! there is a spirit in the breast of his people that cannot be stifled—that will not be quelled—that will speak itself fearlessly—that will make its stern accents of rebuke heard in the deepest recess of depravity—and that will utter its denunciations in thunder on the marble heart of the murderer. And such is the duellist. Such unbiassed reason pronounces him. He intentionally destroys the life of a fellow-being. He does it from personal hostility. And, he does it under circumstances of deliberation, that give the last degree of aggravation to the outrage. Were it done in the heat of instant passion—in a sudden ebullition of unreflect-

ing anger, it would assume the semblance of a palliation; but it has not even this slight covering. The plan was deliberately laid; the circumstances deliberately arranged; and the bloody purpose carried into deliberate execution; and if this is not murder—*deliberate murder*, then that horrid crime exists only in imagination!

We cannot conceive a more odious object in the universe of God, than a being thus returning from the spot where he has left his companion fainting in death. His apparent indifference, his affected composure, so far from mitigating our aversion, provokes our deepest hatred, awakens our inexpressible abhorrence. What his after life may be, we would not even conjecture. But if his breast is not the grave of his conscience, the memory of the dead must haunt him; the ghost of the murdered will hover upon his midnight vision, spread before his startled eye the bloody shroud, point him to the desolate hearth, the widowed heart, the wailing circle of bereaved affection, and peal upon his tingling ear, a wild presage of his hapless doom!

But though the haunting recollections of his dark deed, may disturb the peace of the duellist, yet how comes it that he uniformly escapes the crushing hand of insulted justice. Are we bound to consider him exempt from the great obligations of humanity?—at liberty to trample all law under his feet?—and to commit with impunity whatever crimes his malice or cupidity may suggest? The miserable wretch, who is drawn into crime by the cravings of a consuming hunger, we immure in a dungeon, or suspend from the

scaffold: but the gilded coxcomb, who prowls on human life and domestic peace from the promptings of a malicious wantonness, we kindly forgive. Nay more—he returns from each new sally with fresh laurels, which are none the less captivating because they are stained a little with innocent blood. These crimson colours are the evidence of a high heroic nature—of a chivalric spirit that will not brook rebuke, and that will crush the obtrusive reprovcr into the grave. Thus the blackest crime of which human depravity is capable, is varnished over, and its turpitude forgotten in the bewildering colours which a deluded imagination has cast around it. It is this want of impartial discrimination and retributive justice at which we complain. If all crimes were to pass unpunished, we would not make an exception of duelling, flagrant as it is. But we cannot endure to see the slight wanderer from equity doomed to the house of infamy, while a bustling pretender, with a heart of damning blackness, is allowed to scoff at justice and insult the innocence he has ruined.

When we point the advocates of duelling to the miseries they have spread around themselves, we are confronted with a defence as impudent as it is unjust. Authority is quoted from the usages of an age when ignorance had found her lowest depth, and guilt had learned her last lesson. When we talk of an infraction upon our righteous laws, they plead an exemption: when we mention divine prohibitions, they claim an exonerating privilege: when we complain of injury and outrage, they assert an all-absolving indulgence: when we point to the graves which they have left in their

bloody track, we are told the laws of *honour* are imperious: when we point to broken hearts, widowed and disconsolate, we are told the laws of *honour must* be observed: when we point to orphans, cast on the world's cold charity, we are told there are no exceptions in the code of *honour*: when we point to the mourning circle of bereaved affection, we are told that the deceased was privileged with an opportunity of testifying in the most impressive manner his respect for high and holy *honour*: when we point to a dismal breach made in the community, to an irreparable injury in an important profession, to the accents of sorrow which break from the hearts of thousands, we are told that every thing was done in strict conformity with the rights and usages of ancient and venerable *honour*. 'This is their apology, and our only consolation. We are injured, and then insulted. Yet we tamely submit; and the guilty are allowed to commit fresh offences, and to disseminate their treasonable doctrines wide as heaven.

There is a mournful obtuseness in public sentiment on this subject, a lamentable connivance at this crime. It meets with a lenient indulgence when it ought to encounter at every turn a withering rebuke, and the inflictions of an implacable abhorrence. We ought to treat it as a common enemy, bound by no articles of faith and acknowledging no responsibilities. We should grant it no quarter, nor cease from hostilities till we have sunk it beneath the reach of the most morbid sympathy. We owe this to ourselves, to justice and humanity. We have already suffered too much from its lawless cruelties. Further forbearance is not a

virtue, but a crime—a reprehensible neglect of duty for which we are accountable to God and mankind. We cannot recur to the history of duelling, to its flagrant enormities, without a cold sensation of horror. We are ready to wonder how it ever obtained a momentary existence in an enlightened, virtuous nation. We can hardly persuade ourselves that it is not all a dream, that we are not tracking some monster of the imagination, some accursed spirit, which a fatal spell has called from the shadows of utter night to hover on our sphere and affrighten its helpless inhabitants. But it is not a dream: it is an appalling reality. Its ghastly trophies are around us: youth, genius, and exalted worth, quenched forever, are the sad memorials of its power. Could the grave speak, could the dead be recalled, they would tell us of horrors which no eye hath seen, and no heart could endure! They would disclose those brutal cruelties, and cold blooded murders, that have been hid from the world, or disguised under the mockeries of honourable professions. But the grave cannot be unbarred, nor the sleeper called up from his couch of corruption. Nor do we need this testimony of departed sufferance. We have living witnesses, whose feelings only need language of adequate strength, and they would speak in thunder to this nation. But there is no burning channel of communication, no vital sympathy in the public, that calls forth an expression of their indignant sorrow. The flame dies within them, as lightning in the isolated cloud.

We know not the extent of sorrow and misery, which duelling has occasioned; and even the little which has fallen under the cognizance of the public, is regarded

with unpardonable apathy. We turn away as we pass the grave of the victim, and forget the tears that are falling “feelingly and fast.” Such indifference, if manifested to suffering in any other shape, would stamp our characters with a marble hardihood. Those on whom the grave has untimely closed are not the only sufferers. It is the afflicted relative, the wailing sister, the bereaved wife, the helpless child, that appeal to our hearts. It is the living and not the dead, that call for our decisive action. And shall we delay,—shall we hesitate in adopting those measures which will secure a prevention of this crime? Have we not yet been sufficiently scourged? Must another Hamilton fall?—fresh blood be spilt—and new horrors experienced, before we are ready to act? We have already lingered too long; the evils which have resulted from our delays are immense—we cannot retrieve them; it only remains for us to prevent their recurrence: and if we are not prepared to do this, there are no judgments of heaven too heavy for us. The nation that will not protect herself, when God has given her the means, but that will sluggishly fold her arms, invite peril, and submit to be trampled on, ought to suffer every species of aggression, till calamity shall have forced her into a manly assertion, and devoted defence of her rights. If, with the evils of duelling before our eyes, and with the power to prevent these enormities, we can nevertheless look quietly on, and grant it a fostering indulgence, there are no wounds this scourge can inflict, which we do not deserve. We may expect to be throttled, and assassinated; and to have our folly and indiscretion become the hiss and amazement of posterity.

We appeal to the legislative powers of each state in this Union, for a suppression of this vice within their respective jurisdictions. We call upon them for the enactment and rigid execution of those laws, which may put an end to this growing evil. Let the principals in these bloody combats, be brought to immediate and condign punishment. If death has ensued to either of the parties, let the survivor be treated as a capital offender—as a murderer; and for a warning to others, be made to suffer the penalty due to his crime. Let the decision of unerring rectitude, eternal justice take effect upon him;—"who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," is the sentence of God Almighty—a sentence which man can arrest only at his peril. If the principals survive the contest, let them be declared infamous; let them be disfranchised, or banished the country. They have no claims to privileges, or protection. They have discarded the obligations of the citizen; arrayed themselves against the interests of the public, and ought to be treated as outlaws. Let the seconds be dealt with as felons. Let them be subjected to fines and imprisonment, to privations and damages, that shall render it mean and disgraceful for any one to presume on the companionship of his friend, in this odious affair. If they have so little principle and self-respect, as to volunteer their services, let this eagerness in crime deepen their punishment to a proportionate severity. Wantonness in guilt, will deride the lenity that has mitigated its just doom.

We call upon those, to whom we have committed the high interests of this country, for a suppression of

this threatening evil; for its extermination within the limits of their prerogatives. We conjure them by the sacred trusts which we have reposed in them, and by the solemn character of their responsibilities, to wipe this stigma from our national escutcheon. We demand of them as guardians of the public weal, virtue and honour, the speedy adoption, and vigorous prosecution of measures which shall effectually prevent a recommission of this crime. We cannot submit to a refusal, or a delaying indifference. It is not self-interest that stirs us. We are roused by jealousies of a higher and nobler order—by a deep anxiety for the permanent prosperity and glory of our country. A consciousness of this inspires us with an earnestness, decision, and determination on this subject, that will not easily be diverted from their object. We will not cease in our demands, nor suffer ourselves to sink into quiescence, till the grievances of which we complain are redressed, and till our claims are granted, to the last letter.

It is our privilege to live in a land of freedom and equality; where there is no tyranny to intimidate us, nor insolency of rank to check the free expression of our opinions. It is not only the right, but the solemn duty of each individual, to keep a vigilant watch upon those entrusted with power and influence, and to require of them a course of conduct consonant with the spirit of their stations. We are not bound to grant them any indulgences, which the most insignificant may not claim. Nay, it is not unreasonable to expect in them a purity and exemplariness, proportionate to their political elevation. When therefore we see the men with whom we have en-

trusted our dearest interests, not only conniving at crime in others, but deeply implicating themselves, we cannot, and we will not be silent. When we see them, not only conferring places of trust upon those who can sport with human life, but entering themselves the gladiatorial lists—deserting the duties of their stations, betraying our confidence, forgetting equally character and responsibility, in these criminal and disgraceful feats—and when all this is acted out in broad daylight, and with an air of impudent confidence, we cannot and will not suppress our indignant remonstrances. Our detestations shall have language, and would to heaven, the expression could be strong as the abhorrent feeling which it embodies. We call upon these men—in the name of God we call upon them, to wipe this burning stigma from their characters, to wash their hands clean of this rank sin, and to be baptized into a new and better faith. They stand responsible to us, and to this whole nation for their conduct. The trust and influence which they enjoy emanated from the breast of this people. But for our suffrages they were private citizens. They ought to keep this in vivid remembrance, it will justify to their rational convictions our questioning scrutiny into their conduct, and the tendency of their examples. They are not at liberty to act as private individuals. They are public Magistrates; and their conduct should be of a character that may be safely imitated by all in subordinate stations. But were every man to assume the right of adjudicating and retributing his own wrongs, what would be the consequence? This whole country

would be involved in anarchy. Yet this is the example of the men of whom we complain. We appointed them as legislators; they have legislated perhaps well; but can they expect our confidence and obedience, when they trample upon their own laws, and violate the first principles of justice and humanity? If they may engage in personal hostilities and measures of private revenge, much more the simple citizen, who is not restrained by a public trust, and the influence of a prodigious example. Let their conduct become a public license, and civil order would be at an end. We should be reduced to a state of barbarism. Every man might redress his own injuries, according to the vindictiveness of his unrestrained passions. We should not be secure in our bed-chambers. Our only hope would be in an entire approbation of every man's character; a rebuke would be the signal for the leaping blade, and mortal thrust. Let these men who should be patterns of good order, calculate the horrors that would follow from a general imitation of their example. Let them look steadily at the miseries which must result from the assumption in every individual, of the right to avenge his own wrongs; and then let them put it to their consciences, if they can engage in private combats: and if they can, they ought to be hurled from their stations, banished from civilized society, or chained in dungeons. For ourselves, we should be willing to see every duellist, who is determined to persevere in his profession, arraigned, condemned and executed, on the charge of high treason against his species. But least and last of all, should our clemency be extended to men in stations of trust and influence. And yet it

is a notorious fact, that there is no class of men, so given to this inhuman profession, as our public functionaries. They seem to consider themselves exempt from the obligations of private citizens—at liberty to commit what outrages they please, with perfect impunity. They may wrangle in our streets—on our naval and military posts—in our courts of justice, and halls of legislation—fight, stab, kill each other—and then mock the forms of equity, that would hold them responsible for their conduct. It is thus, the intelligence and virtue of this nation are insulted and trampled upon; while our boasted independence, morality and religion are degraded and disgraced in the eyes of other nations. Were we a nation of slaves, we might find in our helplessness and degradation a necessity, or at least an apology, for our submission to such conduct. But humiliating as it would be, we have no such shelter for our irresolution and tameness. There is not the country under heaven, where individual opinion may be so unceremoniously expressed, and so fearlessly maintained, as that in which we dwell. Every thing invites to an open, manly assertion of personal sentiment; and a strenuous adherence to the dictates of private conscience. And yet we submit to treatment that would disparage the subjects of an absolute despotism. This submission is base, contrary to the spirit of our institutions, and beneath the dignity of our common nature.

We would not kindle an unbridled resentment. It is as far from our intentions, as our power, to stir this nation to violent expedients on this subject. But we would quicken her moral sense; strengthen her self-

respect; rouse her jealousies; deepen the tone of her remonstrance; and impart energy to her prohibitory measures. We would kindle a feeling which none dare encounter; which the most privileged could not resist; and which would overwhelm the first offender. We would not unveil the past, to bring forth the guilty to merited suffering and shame; but we would guard the future. We would cast an embankment against the current, and heave back its waters upon its fountain head; not an evasive rill should be allowed to escape; the whole tide, from surface to its lowest depth, should be arrested. This we *can* do; it is what we *ought* to do; and what we *shall* do, unless we are lost to every just and virtuous sentiment. We are unwilling to believe, that this nation is so prostrated in her moral strength, and so blind to her true interest, that she cannot be roused into a determined resistance to aggression, crime, and insult. If she is—then farewell—an eternal farewell to her peace and happiness, and to the world's last hope! If *we* cannot assert the rights of humanity, or having the power, want the disposition, what can be expected from those who are bowed beneath the yoke of despotism; and upon whom the bondage of ages has exerted its paralyzing effects? If *we* cannot preserve a healthy pulsation, what can they do where the channels of intelligence are obstructed; and where every instrument of moral power is bent into the service of tyranny. If wholesome opinion, and religious sentiment, can be intimidated and over-ruled *here*, in what section of the globe can they exist? The cause of human nature then, is indeed hopeless; her dearest rights are bound to an

inevitable grave, and that without the prospect of a resurrection!

But we do not yet resign ourselves to despair. The spirit of this nation is not broken. Her moral sense is not extinguished. Though she slumbers she will rouse again in her deep undying strength. She will hear the reproaches that come from the graves of her patriots. These martyrs to virtue and freedom have not suffered in vain. Their sacrifices live in vivid remembrance. The lessons of their unyielding devotion are impressed in living type on her soul. She cannot forget the past; she cannot be dead to the future, and not till then will our confidence in her renovation be wrecked. This era of better feeling and manlier conduct has already dawned. There are men who dare to remonstrate at the grievances of which we complain: men who see in duelling the enormities of privileged murder; and who are prepared to embark in any measures for its suppression. Associations are formed and forming, that will present to it a stern, unyielding front; and that will use the means which God and nature have placed in their power for its entire destruction. We wish them all the success which the noblest enterprise may challenge to itself. May their benign doctrines be duly appreciated; their spirit extensively diffused; their solemn purpose adopted by thousands; till the collected feeling of multitudes, bursting out over our national Capitol, shall sweep onward to the remotest hamlet—bearing down all opposition in the march of its unbroken strength.



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